What You Need to Know About Healthcare Personnel Influenza Vaccination

Influenza, or "the flu," is a mild to severe respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. It is a contagious illness, meaning that it can easily spread from person to person. If healthcare workers (also known as healthcare personnel) become infected with the flu, they can spread this illness to their coworkers and patients. Some patients in a hospital are at high risk for complications from the flu, such as the elderly, very young, or those with severe chronic illnesses. Extra care should be taken to prevent the spread of the flu among healthcare workers and patients.

The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all healthcare personnel who work in a healthcare setting receive the flu vaccine each year to help prevent the spread of flu within the workplace. Healthcare personnel include all facility employees, licensed independent practitioners, and adult students/trainees and volunteers, regardless of full time/part time status, clinical responsibility, or patient contact. **Studies show that patients benefit when healthcare workers get vaccinated.**

Many hospitals choose to provide the flu vaccine to their employees, and some hospitals even have policies requiring mandatory vaccination. Currently, there are no state regulations requiring vaccination in Virginia, and healthcare workers are able to decline the flu vaccine.

The 2015 Virginia Healthcare-Associated Infections Annual Report shows the percentage of all healthcare workers in each hospital who received the flu vaccine. **Higher percentages are better, because this indicates that a greater number of healthcare workers are protected against the flu.** For the 2014-2015 flu season (i.e., the most recent flu season with available data), Virginia's overall vaccination percentage was 87.6%. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Healthy People 2020 goal for healthcare worker flu vaccination in the United States is 90%. In Virginia, 52% of hospitals met this goal for the 2014-2015 flu season.

For more information about the CDC recommendations and the national trends of influenza vaccination coverage, see: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/healthcareworkers.htm

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